THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has reported that there have been some instances of dacoities in branches of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) in the recent past.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI), by a circular issued in 1980, had inter-alia advised the RRBs to arrange for full insurance cover of cash-in-safe, in counters and in transit, as well as other valuables against the risk of fire, theft, burglary etc.

By a circular issued in 1985, Government had advised RRBs to identify the branches located in high risk and disturbance prone pockets in consultation with sponsor banks and request the district administrations to provide the necessary personnel and make necessary arrangements. The State Governments have also been requested to provide the necessary protection by posting of guards and patrolling. These instructions were reiterated in 1991. Further, NABARD has also advised RRBs that armed guards may be posted in identified vulnerable branches of RRBs.

Plans to reduce increasing Interest Burden

2933. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are planning to reduce the increasing interest burden which is around Rs. 60,000 crores; and

(b) if so, how and when, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Growth in interest expenditure can be contained only through reducation in fiscal deficit which represents the total borrowings by the Government in a year for financing its expenditure. The rise in interest payments is a sequel to the borrowings undertaken each year for financing plan expenditure. Government would, however, endeavour to contain fiscal deficit by maximising the revenues and controlling the expenditure which will help in reducing the interest burden. On the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Finance, the Central Government requested Reserve Bank of India to carry out a study on the rising interest payments. The report submitted by the Reserve Bank of India is being examined by an Inter Ministerial Group.

Demand of Oxygen Cylinders in Delhi Hospitals

2934. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the demand of hospitals in Delhi of Oxygen Cylinders is not being met fully, thereby hampering the functioning of the hospitals;

(b) if so, the demand and supply position of cylinders during the last two months, the extent of short supply and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to meet the total demand of the hospitals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI): (a) There was no shortage of Oxygen Cylinders in Central Govt. Hospitals in Delhi. According to the information received from National Capital Territory of Delhi, there was some shortage in the supply of Oxygen Cylinders in Din Dayal Upadhaya Hospital and G.B. Pant Hospital. M.C.D. also reported some shortage of Oxygen Cylinders in Hindu Rao Hospital and Kasturba Hospital.

(b) The details are given in the Statement (*see* below).

(c) The Medical Superintendent of each Hospital is expected to monitor the supply and demand of Oxygen Cylinders for smooth functioning of the hospital.